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ABSTRACT

After the Mississippi Legislature passed the Educational Reform Act in 1982, a series of programs were implemented that brought about rapid changes with little or no input from the public school personnel who were affected by them. Accordingly, a survey was conducted of the perceptions of 150 Mississippi principals and 150 superintendents regarding the effects of educational reform. The instrument consisted of 14 questions with forced-choice responses on the effects of various reforms. Respondents were also asked to indicate the need for specialized personnel to perform 10 different kinds of specialized tasks. Findings showed that both principals and superintendents perceived the overall effect of the educational reform movement as beneficial for their schools or school districts. Nevertheless, educational reform was viewed as having a detrimental effect on the morale of their staff. Individual results of the survey for each of the questions are reported and tables are appended. (TE)

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A Study of the Impact of the Educational Reform Movement on Mississippi Schools

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of Mid-South Educational Research Association

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Introduction

The education reform movement in the United States has been in progress for more than a decade. Educational reform in Mississippi began almost a decade ago. Total desegregation of the public schools was accomplished in 1972. Curricular reform began about four years later.

The Mississippi Legislature passed the massive (104 page) Education Reform Act of 1982 during a special session while William Winter was governor. Implementation of it began with the appointment of a 'lay' State Board of Education and its choice of the State's first appointed State Superintendent. Since then Accountability in Instructional Management (AIM), the School Executive Management Institute (SEMI), the Mississippi Teacher Assessment Instrument (MTAI), the Mississippi Administrator Assessment Instrument (MAAI), Performance Based State Accreditation, Provisional Certification of professional personnel, and a massive program for testing student performance have been implemented.

These changes have come very rapidly, often with little warning, and with little or no input from the public school personnel who were affected by them. It was thought, therefore, that a survey of superintendents' and principals' perceptions of the impact of educational reform might provide some useful information.

Procedures

A survey instrument composed of 14 questions about the impact of educational reform on the respondents' school/school district was devised. Respondents were also asked to indicate the need for specialized personnel to perform 10 different kinds of specialized tasks. Each respondent was asked to choose one of three forced choice responses to each of the 14

questions on the first part of the instrument. These choices were: negative impact, no change, and positive impact. Respondents were asked to check as many specialties as they perceived a need for on the second part and to write in any others needed.

All 150 superintendents were surveyed. One hundred and seventeen of them responded. One hundred and fifty principals were randomly chosen. Eighty-three of the principals polled responded. Responses of both principals and superintendents are shown in two sets of tables in the appendix. The first set depicts frequency distribution of responses. The second set of tables shows analysis of variance for the responses.

The Problem

The problem was to determine: (a) the perceptions of principals and superintendents of the impact of certain educational reform activities of educational programs and professional morale; and, (b) if there were significant differences in the perceptions of principals and superintendents.

The Findings

Both principals and superintendents perceived the overall impact of the total educational reform movement as positive on their schools/school districts.

See Tables 1 and 16

Both principals and superintendents perceived the impact of educational reform on the morale of their professional staff as negative.

See Tables 2 and 17

Both principals and superintendents perceived the impact of Accountability in Instructional Management (AIM) as positive.

See Tables 3 and 18

Both principals and superintendents perceived the impact of AIM on the morale of their professional personnel as negative. Their perceptions that the impact on the school program is positive while the impact on professional morale is negative poses an interesting area for further study. Do they perceive morale as an unimportant factor in schooling?

See Tables 4 and 19

Neither principals nor superintendents perceived the impact of the Mississippi Teacher Assessment Instruments (MTAI) in a clear fashion. About 45 percent thought it negative, about 20 percent thought it had brought no change, and about 32 percent thought it had a positive impact.

See Tables 5 and 20

Both principals and superintendents perceived the impact of the MTAI on professional morale as negative. Eighty percent of the principals and 85 percent of the superintendents thought the impact on morale negative.

See Tables 6 and 21

When asked about the impact of administrator evaluation on performance, both principals and superintendents failed to show a clear view. About 40 percent of each group thought it had brought little or no change; whereas, about 36 percent of both groups thought the impact negative.

See Tables 7 and 22

Both principals and superintendents perceived the impact of administrator evaluation on the morale of administrators in similar ways. Their perceptions of the impact of administrator evaluation on morale was much like their perceptions of its impact on administrator performance.

See Tables 8 and 23

There was a significant difference in the perceptions of principals and superintendents of the impact of State Department of Education mandated staff development. Forty-five percent of the principals thought it positive while 69 percent of the superintendents thought it positive.

See Tables 9 and 24

There were no significant differences in the perceptions of principals and superintendents of the impact of the School Executive Management Institute (SEMI) on administration. Slightly over 50 percent of each group thought it positive.

See Tables 10 and 25

Principals and superintendents reported similar perceptions of the overall impact of educational reform on administrator effectiveness. Over 60 percent of each group thought it positive.

See Tables 11 and 26

About 52 percent of principals perceived performance based accreditation as positive while only 43 percent of superintendents thought it positive. However, this was not a significant difference.

See Tables 12 and 27

There was an enormous significant difference between principals' and superintendents' perceptions of the impact of educational reform in the financial resources of local school districts. Superintendents over-

whelmingly thought it negative (87 percent). Perhaps this reflects their greater knowledge of local school finances.

See Tables 13 and 28

There was no significant difference in the perceived needs of the two groups for more or more specialized personnel because of educational reform. The need was perceived by both groups; but, such need tended to be perceived as positive.

See Tables 14 and 29

The second part of the questionnaire asked respondents the kinds of specialized help needed because of the education reform movement. From 75 to 90 percent of both groups indicated the need for such specialized help as: curricular assessment, curricular improvement, instructional improvement or management, school improvement plans, staff evaluation, staff development, research, public relations, and school facility surveys. A variety of other needs were listed in smaller numbers.

See Tables 15 and 30

Summary

Ordinary conversation with principals and superintendents prior to and after the completion of this survey indicated an overwhelmingly negative view of educational reform (except in a few districts - mostly large ones). This is puzzling because the survey did not reveal such negative feelings except in a few areas such as finance. The perceptions that teacher morale is low are probably accurate and they are interesting because the respondents did not, on the whole, perceive a negative impact on their educational programs.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

TABLES

Table 1
Perceptions of the Impact of the
Educational Reform Movement

	Principals		Superintendents	
	N	Percent	N	Percent
Negative	13	16	17	15
No Change	11	13	10	8
Positive	59	71	90	77
Total	83	100	117	100

Table 2
Perceptions of the Impact of the
Educational Reform Movement on the
Morale of Professional Staff

	Principals		Superintendents	
	N	Percent	N	Percent
Negative	42	51	71	61
No Change	14	17	18	15
Positive	27	32	28	24
Total	83	100	117	100

Table 3
Perceptions of the Impact
of AIM on Education

	Principals		Superintendents	
	N	Percent	N	Percent
Negative	17	21	27	23
No Change	18	21	20	17
Positive	48	58	70	60
Total	83	100	117	100

Table 4
Perceptions of the Impact of
AIM on the Morale of Teachers

	Principals		Superintendents	
	N	Percent	N	Percent
Negative	45	54	72	62
No Change	17	21	23	20
Positive	21	25	22	18
Total	83	100	117	100

Table 5
Perceptions of the Impact of
The Uses of the Mississippi Teacher
Assessment Instrument (MTAI)

	Principals		Superintendents	
	N	Percent	N	Percent
Negative	38	46	56	48
No Change	18	22	23	20
Positive	27	32	38	32
Total	83	100	117	100

Table 6
Perceptions of the Impact of
The Uses of the MTAI on the Morale
of Teachers

	Principals		Superintendents	
	N	Percent	N	Percent
Negative	66	80	100	85
No Change	9	11	9	8
Positive	8	9	8	7
Total	83	100	117	100

Table 7
Perceptions of the Impact of
Administrator Evaluation on Education

	Principals		Superintendents	
	N	Percent	N	Percent
Negative	22	27	31	26
No Change	36	43	47	40
Positive	25	30	39	34
Total	83	100	117	100

Table 8
Perceptions of the Impact of
Administrator Evaluation on Administrators' Morale

	Principals		Superintendents	
	N	Percent	N	Percent
Negative	31	37	40	35
No Change	30	36	53	46
Positive	22	27	24	19
Total	83	100	117	100

Table 9
Perceptions of the Impact of
State Department Mandated Staff
Development on Education

	Principals		Superintendents	
	N	Percent	N	Percent
Negative	21	25	17	15
No Change	25	30	19	16
Positive	37	45	81	69
Total	83	100	117	100

Table 10
The Impact of the Executive Management Institute on Administration

	Principals		Superintendents	
	N	Percent	N	Percent
Negative	13	16	17	15
No Change	26	31	35	29
Positive	44	53	65	56
Total	83	100	117	100

Table 11
Perceptions of the Overall Impact of the Educational Reform Movement on Administrator Effectiveness

	Principals		Superintendents	
	N	Percent	N	Percent
Negative	9	11	15	13
No Change	22	26	27	23
Positive	52	63	75	64
Total	83	100	117	100

Table 12
Perceptions of the Impact of Performance Based Accreditation

	Principals		Superintendents	
	N	Percent	N	Percent
Negative	11	13	35	30
No Change	29	35	32	27
Positive	43	52	50	43
Total	83	100	117	100

Table 13
Perceptions of the Impact of the
Educational Reform Movement on the
Financial Resources

	Principals		Superintendents	
	N	Percent	N	Percent
Negative	28	34	101	87
No Change	40	48	11	9
Positive	15	18	5	4
Total	83	100	117	100

Table 14
Perceptions of the Impact of the
Educational Reform Movement on the Need
for Specialized Personnel and/or the Retraining of Personnel

	Principals		Superintendents	
	N	Percent	N	Percent
Negative	14	17	37	32
No Change	36	43	24	20
Positive	33	40	56	48
Total	83	100	117	100

Table 15
Perceived Need for Expertise and/or
Professional Services Brought About By
Educational Reform

Need	Principals	Superintendents
	N	N
Curricular Assessment	59	94
Curricular Improvement	57	96
Instructional Improvement	53	95
School Improvement Plans	47	104
Staff Evaluation	49	82
Staff Development	49	86
Public Relations	49	51
Accreditation	63	30
Improvement of Achievement	47	75
Research	32	102
Financial Planning & Management	1	13
School Consolidation		5
Management Information Systems		10
Managing Paper Work	2	10
Other	1	10

N = 83 Principals
N = 117 Superintendents

Table 16
Perceptions of the Impact of
Educational Reform, as a Whole, on
School Districts/Schools

	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	F
Principals	83	2.55	.75	
Superintendents	117	2.63	.73	
Total	200			.55
df = 199				

Table 17
Perceptions of the Impact of
Educational Reform on the Morale
of Professional Staff

	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	F
Principals	83	1.82	.90	
Superintendents	117	1.67	.85	
Total	200			1.33
df = 199				

Table 18
Perceptions of the Impact of
AIM, Accountability in Instructional
Management on Education

	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	F
Principals	83	2.37	.81	
Superintendents	117	2.35	.83	
Total	200			.04
df = 199				

Table 19
Perceptions of the Impact of
AIM on Teacher Morale

	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	F
Principals	83	1.71	.85	
Superintendents	117	1.54	.77	
Total	200			2.02
df = 199				

Table 20
Perceptions of the Impact of
the Mississippi Teacher Assessment
Insruments (MTAI) on Education

	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	F
Principals	83	1.87	.88	
Superintendents	117	2.03	.90	
Total	200			1.54
df = 199				

Table 21
Perceptions of the Impact of the
MTAI on Teacher Morale

	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	F
Principals	83	1.30	.64	
Superintendents	117	1.27	.64	
Total	200			.09
df = 199				

Table 22
Perceptions of the Impact of the
Evaluation of Administrators on Education

	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	F
Principals	83	2.04	.76	
Superintendents	117	2.21	.76	
Total	200			2.40
df = 199				

Table 23
Perceptions of the Impact of the
Evaluation of Administrators on Their Morale

	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	F
Principals	83	1.89	.80	
Superintendents	117	1.89	.75	
Total	200			.001

df = 199

Table 24
Perceptions of the Impact of State
Mandated Staff Development on Education

	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	F
Principals	83	2.19	.81	
Superintendents	117	2.54	.74	
Total	200			10.232*

df = 199
* Significant at .05

Table 25
Perceptions of the Impact of the
Executive Management Institute on Administration

	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	F
Principals	83	2.37	.74	
Superintendents	117	2.38	.74	
Total	200			.001

df = 199

Table 26
Perceptions of the Overall Impact
of the Educational Reform Movement on
Administrator Effectiveness

	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	F
Principals	83	2.52	.69	
Superintendents	117	2.51	.71	
Total	200			.003

df = 199

Table 27
Perceptions of the Impact of
Performance Based Accreditation on
the School District/School

	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	F
Principals	83	2.39	.71	
Superintendents	117	2.24	.81	
Total	200			1.76

df = 199

Table 28
Perceptions of the Impact of
the Educational Reform Movement on the
Financial Resources of the School District/School

	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	F
Principals	83	1.84	.71	
Superintendents	117	1.21	.53	
Total	200			52.90*

df = 199
* Significant at .05